

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A starter for ~~engines~~ engines, comprising:
  - an electromagnetic switch;
  - a pinion gear movable along an axial direction; and
  - a shift lever for driving the pinion gear by the electromagnetic switch, the shift lever including a plurality of sheets of resilient leaf springs inclinedly supported at a middle portion thereof and having contact portions at both ends thereof,
    - wherein the drive spring includes a slit end portion in which gaps are formed among the respective leaf springs at least at one of the contact portions and the respective leaf springs include the contact portions having differences of distal end positions longer than thickness of the respective leaf springs contiguous to each other and brought into contact with an opposing member at positions different from each other.
2. (Canceled)
3. (Original) The starter as in Claim 1, wherein the contact portions has curved faces.
4. (Withdrawn) A starter for engines comprising:
  - a starter motor;
  - an output shaft driven by the starter motor and having a helical spline at an outer periphery thereof;
    - a movable cylindrical body having a pinion gear in mesh with a ring gear of an engine, fitted to the helical spline of the output shaft, and provided to move forward and rearward in an axial direction along the helical spline of the output shaft;

a shift lever device brought into contact with the movable cylindrical body for advancing the movable cylindrical body; and

a driving device for moving the shift lever device to a position thereof in contact with the movable cylindrical body,

wherein the shift lever device includes a lever holder and a leaf spring, the lever holder and the leaf spring are arranged to be capable of being brought into contact with the driving device, and

wherein the leaf spring is not brought into contact with the driving device and the lever holder is brought into contact with the leaf spring or disposed proximately to the leaf spring, when the movable cylindrical body is stationary.